

# OPEN Quick Guide: Design Step 1 - Design your program and its outcomes

This quick guide is part of a suite of technical resources developed by OPEN on behalf of The Centre.

For more resources, go to [www.outcomes.org.au](http://www.outcomes.org.au)



# OPEN Quick Guide: Design Step 1

## **Design your program and outcomes provides an overview of the design stage of the Outcomes Journey.**

Step 1: Design your program, objectives and theory of change

Step 2: Design your outcome measurement approach (See OPEN Quick Guide: Design Step 2)

At the end of working through these Quick Guides you will have defined your program model and measurable outcomes, established the scope and methods you will use to measure your progress, and planned for effective implementation and processes to reflect, learn and improve as you go.

You can work through the design phase if you are developing a new program, adapting an existing evidence informed program or adapting an evidence based program.

## **Design your program and its outcomes**

The first steps in Design are to plan your program and outcomes:

- Design and document the key components of the program i.e. what you will do and how you will do it
- Develop a theory of change or logic model to define your outcomes and how you expect the program activities to achieve the expected outcomes.

The best program design process will draw upon evidence and involve input from clients and key stakeholders. Consultation must be genuine to be effective and should take place throughout the design process. By using information gathered from your stakeholders, your program will be better targeted to client's needs.

## **Design and document your program and its key components**

The first step is to design and document the key elements or components of your program. Some of these will have already been determined while you were identifying the needs, issue or problem to be addressed and determined your program response. Now you need to be more specific and develop your program approach.

Key components of a good program plan will include all the items needed for anyone to understand your program. This includes:

- key background, drivers of the issue or need
- program objective/s
- service delivery features
- expected outcomes
- governance arrangements
- risk assessment
- resources
- stakeholder consultation/ communication plan.

Through planning your program, you will determine which of these elements is relevant or helpful for you. Complete each item, preferably in consultation with others and document within a program plan template.

The content in your program plan is important as it builds clear and agreed understanding of the program, supports successful delivery, helps you measure your progress and is an excellent communication tool.

To get you started look at the **Design - OPEN Program Plan template** which is provided at the end of this section.(forthcoming)

## Develop a Theory of Change or Logic Model

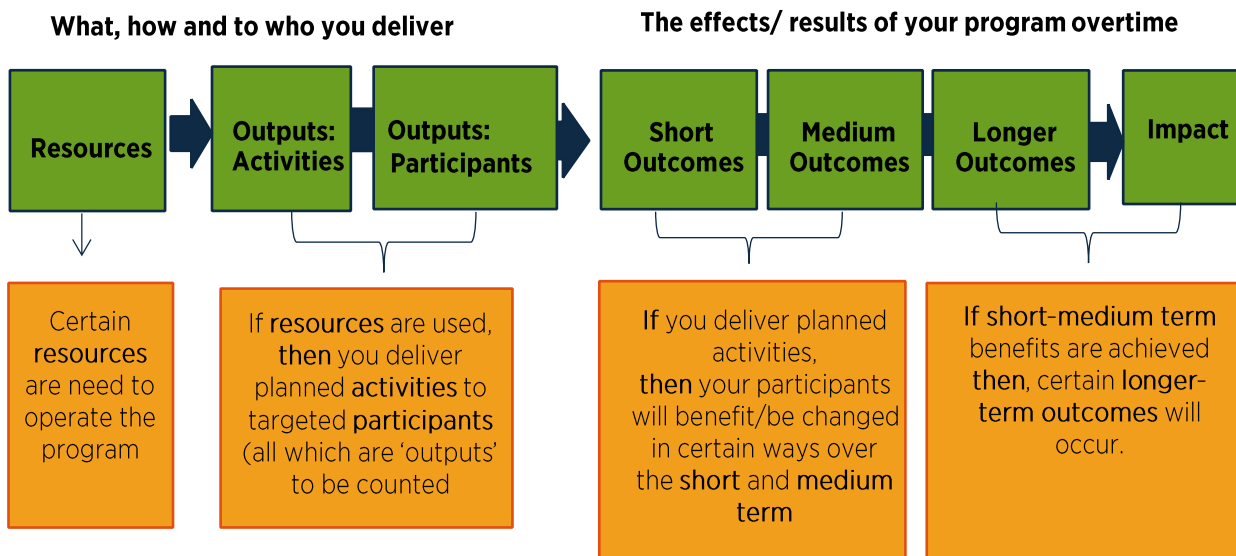
Good program design includes clear, defined and measurable activities and outcomes. A theory of change or logic model is the key tool for defining and mapping outcomes and testing assumptions.

There are many terms used to describe these models and different ways of formatting them. Regardless of the language used, theory of change or logic models map out in a diagram or chart the relationship between your actions and their intended effect (or outcomes). Choose a language and format that helps you order your thinking. (For simplicity, from this point forward, the language of logic model will be used throughout).

A logic model represents your program, its features and outcomes, in a simplified often one-page diagram. It will be informed by evidence and the experience of others, and maps out how you expect your program components and activities to **cause** your anticipated outcomes.

In developing a logic model, examine each aspect of your activity, program or service to consider and test how they will work together to cause intended short, medium, and longer-term outcomes over a specified time period. These components are positioned in a **series of 'if-then' relationships that are represented through a simple, easily understood diagram on a page.**

One common program logic format is shown below. The orange boxes show the definitions of the components and the logic underpinning the relationships between them. (Note - As mentioned above, some of this jargon is used differently in different areas. For example, sometimes 'resources' might be known as 'inputs'. Use what you're comfortable with and makes sense in your context.



A logic model uses plain language and has outcomes that are measurable (Consider the acronym SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound). It is specific about how and who is influenced or affected by program activities with reference to logic, evidence about what is known, and experience.

To get the full value out of your program logic it is best to:

- Develop it as a group process, where the process of engagement, agreement and testing with your program team and stakeholders is as, or more important as the end diagram.
- Keep it as simple as possible; it is the bare bones of your program. In the main it should not include administrative, or project management components, these go in your program administrative documentation.
- Try to link activities to the series of effects/outcomes they cause. It is expected that activities will contribute to multiple effects or outcomes.

Once you have built your program logic through engagement with others, you will need to develop a written description or narrative of the program logic for inclusion in your Program Plan and Outcome Measurement Plan. Describing your program logic in a **narrative form provides another opportunity to 'check the logic', increasing the chances** of defining measurable outcomes that are a plausible result of your activities. It is also important to document the main assumptions about how you think change takes place.

## For getting started

Further resources are forthcoming on the topics below

- **OPEN Program Plan template here.** This takes you through the key components of a program plan with explanatory comments.(forthcoming)
- **OPEN Fact Sheet – Getting Started with Program logic here.** This provides further details on the basics of using logic models and tips to avoid some of the common pitfalls. (forthcoming)
- **OPEN Tool – Program logic template with explanatory notes here.** This provides guidance on filling out each component of your theory of change and some common pitfalls.(forthcoming)

## What are some tools that can help?

Designing a Program Logic	
The Australian Institute of Family Studies practice resource <a href="https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practiceguides/getting-most-out-program-logicmodels">https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practiceguides/getting-most-out-program-logicmodels</a>	This resource provides detailed guidance on creating a Program Logic including a <a href="#">video</a> 'guided tour'
Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, NZ: Making Sense of Evaluation – A Handbook for everyone <a href="https://thehub.swa.govt.nz/resources/making-sense-of-evaluation-a-handbookfor-everyone">https://thehub.swa.govt.nz/resources/making-sense-of-evaluation-a-handbookfor-everyone</a>	Provides a plain English explanation with everyday examples of program logic development. A great place to start.
NPC: Creating Your theory of change: NPCs practical guide <a href="https://www.thinknpc.org/resourcehub/ten-steps/">https://www.thinknpc.org/resourcehub/ten-steps/</a>	Provides a 10-step approach to developing a theory of change. Easy language and instructions.
SNAICC: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and Family Services Evaluation Readiness Toolkit <a href="https://www.snaicc.org.au/sectordevelopment/monitoring-andevaluation/">https://www.snaicc.org.au/sectordevelopment/monitoring-andevaluation/</a>	Has been designed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Child and Family Services. It provides an excellent and assessable explanation and step by step approach that many generalist services will value.
Dylomo: online logic model builder <a href="https://dylomo.com/">https://dylomo.com/</a>	Dylomo offers an online logic model builder that can be viewed in “static” or “dynamic” formats and updated in real time. This could be a great addition to a group workshop or development session.